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Notes of Discussion at a Special Meeting  
of the National Security Council in the  
President's Office immediately following the  
Regular NSC Meeting on March 5, 1959

In attendance:

The President  
The Vice President  
The Acting Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Director, Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization  
The Secretary of the Treasury  
The Attorney General  
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Director, U. S. Information Agency  
Assistant Secretary of State, Livingston Merchant  
The Assistant to the President  
The Special Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
The White House Staff Secretary  
The Assistant White House Staff Secretary  
The Executive Secretary, NSC

The President referred initially to various suggestions as to the use of the United Nations in connection with the Berlin situation. The President commented that the big problem was how to make it clear that the other side is the real aggressor, while what we wish to do is to go on with the peaceful supply of West Berlin. He said that the main purpose of this meeting was to find out how urgently planning is going on regarding what we may have to do in connection with the Berlin situation.

DECLASSIFIED WITH DELETIONS:

E.O. 12356, SEC. 3.4(b)

Agency Case NSC F-89-723

NLE Case 78-229-1

By 742 NLE Date 12/18/85

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Mr. Gray then raised the question of a public announcement regarding this Special Meeting and read a proposed draft statement (attached hereto). The President said that he had called this meeting in order to keep it to the fewest possible people. He said that if he thought it would be announced publicly, he would have wished to tell the other people who were in the regular NSC Meeting. Secretary McElroy thought the public announcement might indicate over-anxiety regarding Berlin. The President remarked that Secretary Dulles thought that the public was not yet aware of the gravity of the situation. The problem was how not to get hysterical. In this connection, the President reiterated that there would be nothing worse than for us to mobilize, which would in effect constitute a victory for the Russians.

In answer to a question by General Persons regarding Congressional leaders, the President noted that we now have the problem of concerting our views in preparation for Mr. Macmillan's visit. The President expressed concern that Chancellor Adenauer may be weakening his views on the situation. The President said that since 1955 we have insisted that reunification of Germany can occur only through free elections. Until recently Adenauer has said that to bring up any different approach would in fact *effect* open a can of worms. However, the President understood that Adenauer now says that we might bring up other approaches during a course of negotiations with the Soviets.

Secretary Herter reported that the State Department had prepared a working paper on the elements of a U. S. position regarding negotiations

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with the Soviets. He said that this paper was now being coordinated with Defense, in preparation for the International Working Group meetings with our Allies which will begin next Monday. The President referred to the British willingness to let East Germans stamp Allied papers. The President said that we have stood firmly behind Adenauer in resisting this procedure. There are indications now, however, that Adenauer *vehicles* might be willing to let the East Germans stamp Allied papers and inspect loads in open ~~vessels~~ *to say*. If this is so, it is difficult where we stand now. The President believed that the decision as to the critical point is Adenauer's.

Mr. Merchant noted that Ambassador Bruce felt that Adenauer may have taken a weaker position in the recent conversations with Secretary Dulles in order to draw us out as to how firm we were. Mr. Merchant noted that Adenauer was firmer in the later meetings with Secretary Dulles.

The President again noted that it was very difficult to work out what constitutes the critical point in the denial of the access to Berlin, and what we would do next if that point had been reached.

Secretary Herter noted that Adenauer is not well. He has been vacillating recently, and has defections within his own party.

The Vice President commented that the President's objective has been to maintain firmness without being provocative. The Vice President noted, however, that there is a considerable segment of Congress and the Press who point up that the Administration is not going along with such steps as mobilization and, therefore, say that the President's determination is not strong. The Vice President thought that announcing this meeting to the Press would be consistent with the President's middle ground, and would help to counter such Congressional and Press criticism.

The President said that on balance he thought the announcement should be made, and requested Mr. Gray to call the people who had attended the regular NSC Meeting, but not this Special Meeting, and tell them that the President would have invited them if he had known that this meeting was to be made public. The President then authorized a Press announcement consisting of the first sentence of the draft proposed by Mr. Gray with some modifications.

The Vice President then expressed the belief that a meeting with Congressional leaders would be very good. He pointed out that some Members of the Congress have shown considerable restraint regarding Berlin, and that more will if they feel that they are in on the know. The President said that he planned to meet with Congressional leaders, but did not want to have to change his position after meeting with Macmillan. The Vice President thought it would be helpful to meet with Congressional leaders both before and after the Macmillan visit. General Twining raised the point as to whether the public had been told the magnitude of the danger. The President commented that the difficulty is we would then be accused of threatening war with Russia.

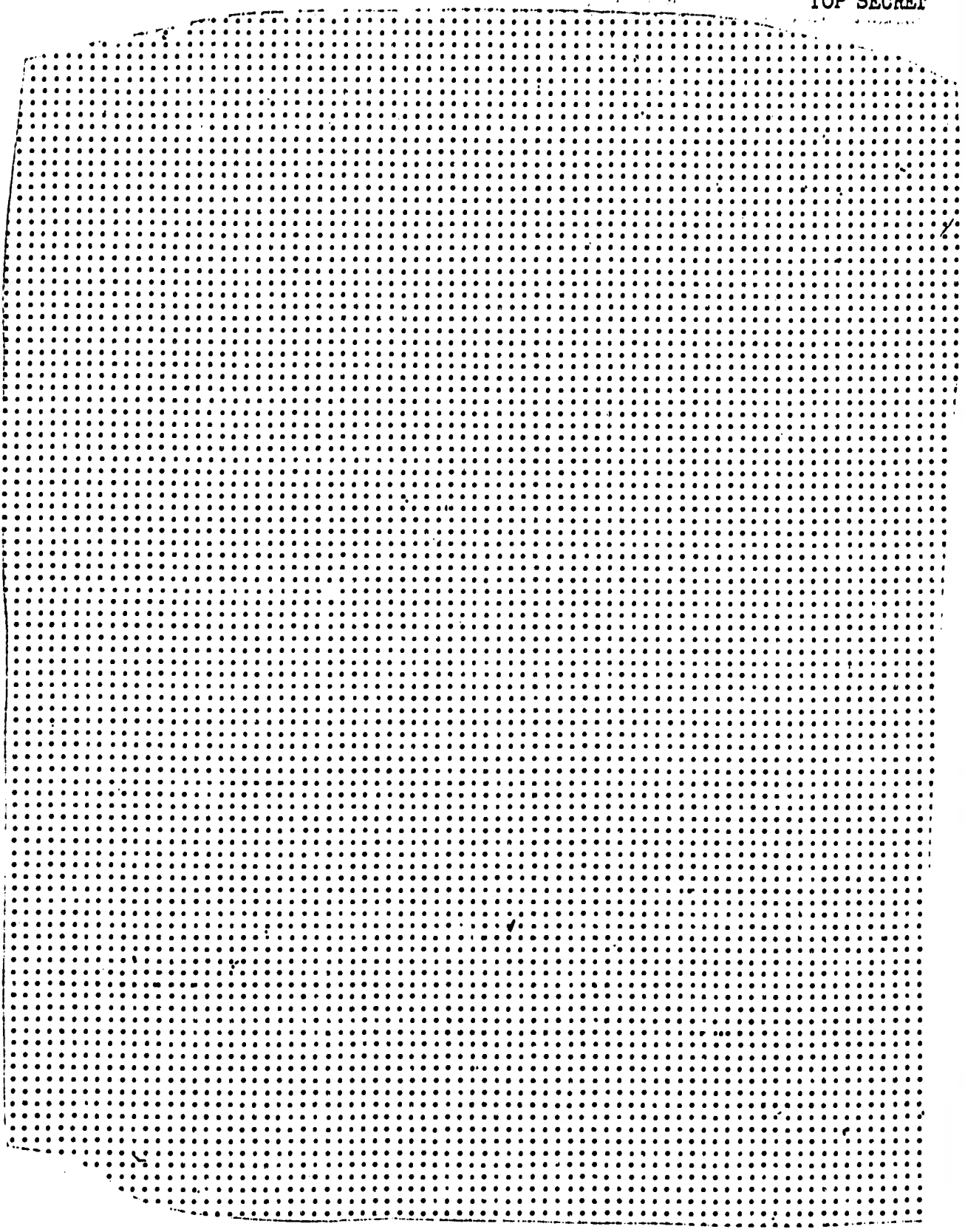
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After considerable discussion as to possible attendance, timing and nature of a meeting with the Congressional leaders, the President decided to have a meeting with the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate and the House on the next day, March 6, 1959, at 10:30 a.m.

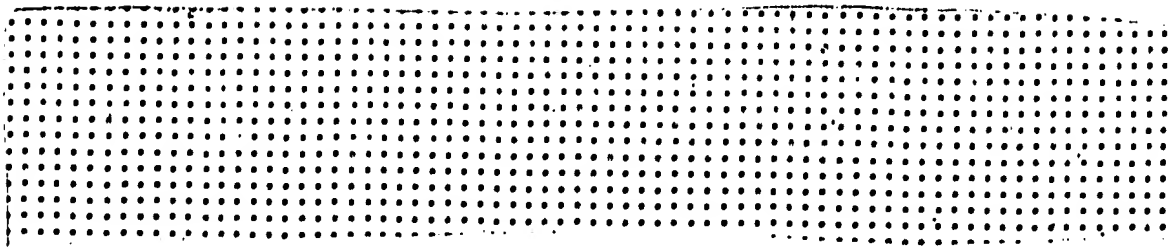
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The President thought that this was all that could be usefully discussed at this meeting, and the meeting adjourned.

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